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# CONTEMPORARY ECHOES

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## "POLITICAL PLEDGES"

*(From the Hartford Courant)*

From month to month expectation is on tiptoe to catch what Editor Harvey will say next in THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW concerning the Presidential campaign and its candidates and prospects. His brilliant essays bristling with criticism and sparkling with wit, have brought it to pass that attention waits upon his utterances as upon those of no other writer of our day. Here he is again, and almost surpassing himself in a discussion of "Political Pledges," which cuts to the quick and must provoke inextinguishable laughter, not only in Republican circles, but among the Democratic gods and heroes as well, if, peradventure, they retain any sense of honesty and humor.

Mr. Harvey arrives at the issues of the campaign by what he calls a somewhat circuitous route, but his lamentation over Maud, the devoted, but departed Democratic mule, whose heart was broken at Bryan's withdrawal from the Cabinet, is—pardon the classical phrase—"funnier than a goat." Witness her epitaph: "Here lies Maud, aetat 42, the Most Faithful Mule (except John W. Kern) in all Indiana. Requiescat in pace."

Mr. Harvey proceeds to review the aggregation of positive pledges contained in the Democratic platform of 1912, and to recall some of those pledges in the light of Mr. Wilson's declaration that "we say what we mean, and mean what we say," and that "our pledges are made to be kept while in office." One by one he recalls them, quoting them verbatim, to show how they have been rejected by a Democratic Congress and President or repudiated by a Democratic convention, and, in some cases, "for the quite obvious purpose of depriving the opposition of an issue." No less than twelve of these positive pledges are accurately recalled to be designated as broken or violated or "nothing done."

Over that one which bound the Democratic candidate to the principle of a single Presidential term Mr. Harvey discreetly draws a veil. From all the rest he withdraws the veil. It is neither permissible nor practicable to copy here the pages of this searching and scathing exposure of the Democratic Party's claim of fidelity to its promises. They should be read line for line and word for word. But the conclusion of them is clear enough in the following words: "The ghastly irony of it all! And the brazen humbug of pretense!" Particularly incisive is the criticism of Mr. Wilson's renunciation of the historic Democratic doctrine of the tariff

and his recognition of the right and power, hitherto denied, to impose protective duties. On the eve of an election the President accepts "this timely proposal" of protection, and "the Democratic sugar-coated pill" is duly swallowed by the faithful in their abject docility.

With regard to the predominant question of Americanism, Mr. Harvey quotes both the Republican and the Democratic pronouncements, and adds: "Herein the Republican Party has a tremendous advantage and makes most effective appeal." He scores Mr. Wilson's "belligerent but unsupported notes" and his humiliating failure to safeguard the lives and properties of American citizens. He indicates the insincerity and fatuity of that part of the Democratic declaration of Americanism which hints at alien conspiracies, and upon which the President insisted, and calls it "mere political buncombe of the cuttlefish variety." How sad is this last for the pro-German shouters against Hughes!

Finally, says Mr. Harvey, the issue "will be one of sincerity based upon character." It would be rash to prophesy the future attitude or action of a prophet, and where Mr. Harvey will be found as the decisive day draws near, is as yet conjectural. But his words, "Sincerity based upon character," touch the root of the whole matter, as many regard it. Not only in the numerous violations or evasions of positive pledges, and in a great variety of political inconsistency and buncombe have we had insincerity, but in other things as well. We have had rhetorical felicities, oratorical idealism, brave and beautiful expositions of contradictory principles, a sententious and sometimes eloquent self-complacency, a profession of almost idolatrous yet most autocratic people-worship, not to mention other striking things, but what we have not had, what to our mind has, for the most part, been lacking in utterances and actions, is the clear, distinct, unmistakable note and ring of a simple sincerity. That is the matter, and for many besides Mr. Harvey "the ultimate issue will be one of sincerity based upon character."

*(From the Louisville Courier-Journal)*

Somebody ought to take George Harvey out somewhere and talk to him. He is going on scan'lous. Under the guise of a feeling tribute to Maud—the Indiana mule that fell down when she undertook to put Mr. Bryan in the White House—he indites a satiric homily upon party platforms, not to mention the broken promises of public men. Since when were political pledges made to be kept? The first thing that the editor of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW knows he will be suspected of a leaning for Hughes.

Then he has come out for Huerta. It is true that Huerta is dead. Maybe that explains the reason why. It costs nothing and it may excite sympathy. Colonel Harvey was ever a sentimentalist. "There was no difficulty," he says in a vein that might be thought critical of our good Woodrow Wilson, "in sending Huerta to prison to die, though for what offense nobody knows." Heavens! Didn't Huerta drink? Was he not suspected of playing cards? Was it not sufficient offense that he got in the way of the New Freedom and made faces at the Gospel of Humanity? Shades of Von Papen—sakes of Boy-Ed—what would Colonel Harvey have?

But to be serious—which in an atmosphere of so much wit is a trifle binding—with respect to the President's indictment of certain foreigners, the renowned editor of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* is neither wary nor just. Quoting Mr. Wilson's flag-day speech to the effect that "there is disloyalty active in the United States that must be crushed," Colonel Harvey says:

"Now if it be a fact—and surely no President would make so grave an accusation unless sure of his ground—that disloyalty is not only 'active in the United States,' but even 'shows its ugly head' where he can 'see it'; if, in other words, as is plainly implied, the country is infested with traitors whose whereabouts are known or discoverable, whose business is it to run them to earth and either drive them out of the country or put them in jail?

"Surely the obligation does not rest upon Mr. Hughes, who has neither the information nor the authority. And surely not upon a political party out of power, which is neither required nor able to enforce the laws. Where then lies the duty?

"The accusation is of conspiracy 'instigated for the purpose of advancing the interests of foreign countries to the prejudice and detriment of our own country.' Whether or not such an act falls technically within the constitutional definition of treason as 'adhering to their (the United States') enemies, giving them aid and comfort,' it comes perilously near it, and, in any case, it constitutes a crime punishable under laws which either exist already or could be obtained in a day's time.

"The Constitution fixes the responsibility and confers the authority upon the President himself. If he possesses the information, why does he not act instead of meaninglessly warning political opponents against 'surrendering their integrity' and 'modifying their policy'? We can understand why the adversaries of a candidate for re-election might call him to task for failure to heed his oath to enforce the laws, but self-accusation on the part of a President himself is, we venture to assert, no less unprecedented than it is amazing. The most charitable conclusion is that the charge itself either lacks foundation or could not be sustained or is mere political buncombe of the cuttlefish variety."

Colonel Harvey must know—his reading of detective stories as they relate equally to Scotland Yard and old Mulberry Street cannot have failed to inform him—that although Inspector Bucket is sure both of his man and the man's deed of crime, he dare not make the arrest without a warrant. The guilt must be *de facto*. The malefactor must be taken red-handed. Suspicion amounting to certainty is not enough.

*(From the Louisville Herald)*

Colonel George Harvey, in *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, laments the death of Maud, confidential adviser to William Jennings Bryan, whom, it was announced in 1896, she would accompany to Washington on the occasion of that inauguration.

It never happened. An unkind fate intervened. She had to live along as best she could till 1900. And then again it didn't happen. She must needs be comforted for eight years more awaiting that call from Colonel Bryan that a discerning electorate just kept right on putting off until a more convenient day. Restored to chirpiness when her idol accepted the position of Secretary of State "as a stepping stone to the Presidency," she took sick at the time of the great severance, pined away and died. On her headstone will be found these chiselled words:

**Here lies Maud, aetat 42, the Most Faithful Mule in All  
Indiana. Requiescat in pace.**

And when Mr. Bryan beheld that "pace" he "lifted up his voice and wept."

Colonel Harvey wants us to believe that the reason why the Democratic platform bears no resemblance to those which preceded it is because Maud, the soul and inspiration of the others, lies dead. It followed that President Wilson had a free hand. And so, by the grace of Maud, deceased but not forgotten, we reach the issues of the day.

The noticeable thing about them is that they are not issues. They are pledges made "to be kept while in office." They do not expound Democratic doctrine as in the palmy days of Maud. They are conventional, not doctrinal, and with as little of the Star-Eyed as could decently be excluded. How true the remark that, if Maud didn't die of a broken heart, she might have. Yes, and should have.

There are for the sake of succession in all Democratic platforms some reaffirmations that are meaningless, and meant to be. There are some unreserved indorsements, insincere and not ashamed of it, there are some palpable denials of earlier planks.

Take for example the one declaring Governors of our Territories must be qualified by bona fide residence. That was 1912. Burton Harrison was sent to the Philippines; Yager to Porto Rico. That was later. Neither had ever seen the blessed islands before—like enough, never wanted to.

Maud died at the psychological moment. She could not forget the *Lusitania* and the meaningless pledge of 1912 as to the constitutional rights of American citizens that must go with them throughout the world. She could not bear to think of that protection guaranteed to them on the border and of the hundreds of American lives lost in Mexico to whom protection was specifically and officially denied. How could Maud look upon her benefactor, who was also her ward, and not shed a tear when people mentioned a single term?

The Democratic Party had a great forgettery.

Maud had an accusing memory.

She had suffered much and suffered many. She had lost the art of kicking.

Decidedly, Maud is better dead.